



National City Focused General Plan Update

Land Use and Community Character Element

DRAFT Existing Conditions Report

1. Introduction

The purpose of the Land Use Element is to plan for and identify where future development and redevelopment should be directed. This element balances growth and change with preserving and improving well established residential neighborhoods and commercial and industrial cores, and overall quality of life.

National City recognizes that creating a complementary mix of residential, employment, commercial, service, and recreational uses is essential to supporting a sustainable community. In addition, creating and preserving a unique community identity fosters a positive sense of place and enriches quality of life. Therefore, land use and community character are integrated in the element to ensure that the physical forms, patterns, and aesthetic features of future development and redevelopment advance the City's desire for a higher quality of life and a more sustainable future. There are a number of important relationships between the Land Use Element, State law, and local documents that are summarized in the following sections.

1.1. Relationship to State Law

General Plans are required by State law (Government Code Section 65302(a)) to include a Land Use Element that designates the general distribution, location, and extent of land for housing, business, industry, open space, education, public facilities, and other categories of public and private uses of land. The Land Use Element is also required to include standards of residential density and building intensity for the planning area.

1.2. Relationship to Other General Plan Elements

The Land Use Element correlates all land use issues into a set of coherent development policies. Other elements of the General Plan include goals and policies related to land use issues. The Transportation Element, for example, addresses the transportation needs resulting from the land use pattern and establishes policies for street design and facility standards. The Noise and Nuisance Element addresses noise issues generated by development, such as traffic. For a complete understanding of the purposes, intentions, and development requirements of the Land Use Element, the City's other adopted elements should be referred to in conjunction.

1.3. Relationship to Community Vision

The Land Use Element supports the City's vision that was established in 2011 to become a nationally recognized model that demonstrates how small jurisdictions inside of a large metropolitan area can

proactively address a wide variety of issues, such as global climate change, population growth, and social equity and well-being, through innovative solutions. The Land Use Element establishes a land use pattern and framework for development informed by the City's guiding principles:

- **Smart Growth:** Recognize the importance of linking land use and transportation planning.
- **Quality of Life:** Improve the quality of life for everyone within National City.
- **Health and Safety:** Seek opportunities to improve public health and safety performance.
- **Education:** Emphasize the importance of schools by making them focal points within every neighborhood.
- **Economic Development:** Provide a framework for sound economic development strategies.

1.4. Relationship to Strategic Plan

In 2007, National City adopted a Five-Year Strategic Plan to address community and economic development. The Strategic Plan provides guidance to promote collaboration, improve public communication, and align city departments. The Strategic Plan has undergone subsequent updates, with the most recent being in 2019. The goals and policies within the Land Use Element reflect the latest direction provided by the Strategic Plan.

2. Existing Context and Land Use Pattern

2.1. Corporate Boundary and City Structure

National City is a centrally located community in the San Diego South Bay that is home to an estimated 61,121 residents¹. The city is bordered by San Diego to the north and east, Chula Vista to the south, the unincorporated areas of Lincoln Acres and Bonita to the south and southeast, and San Diego Bay to the west. Figure 1 shows where National City lies in the context of the San Diego region, and Figure 2 shows its planning boundaries. National City is a largely developed area with a mix of residential neighborhoods and industrial and commercial uses.

¹ American Community Survey (ACS), Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates, 2019 5-Year Estimate (2015-2019).

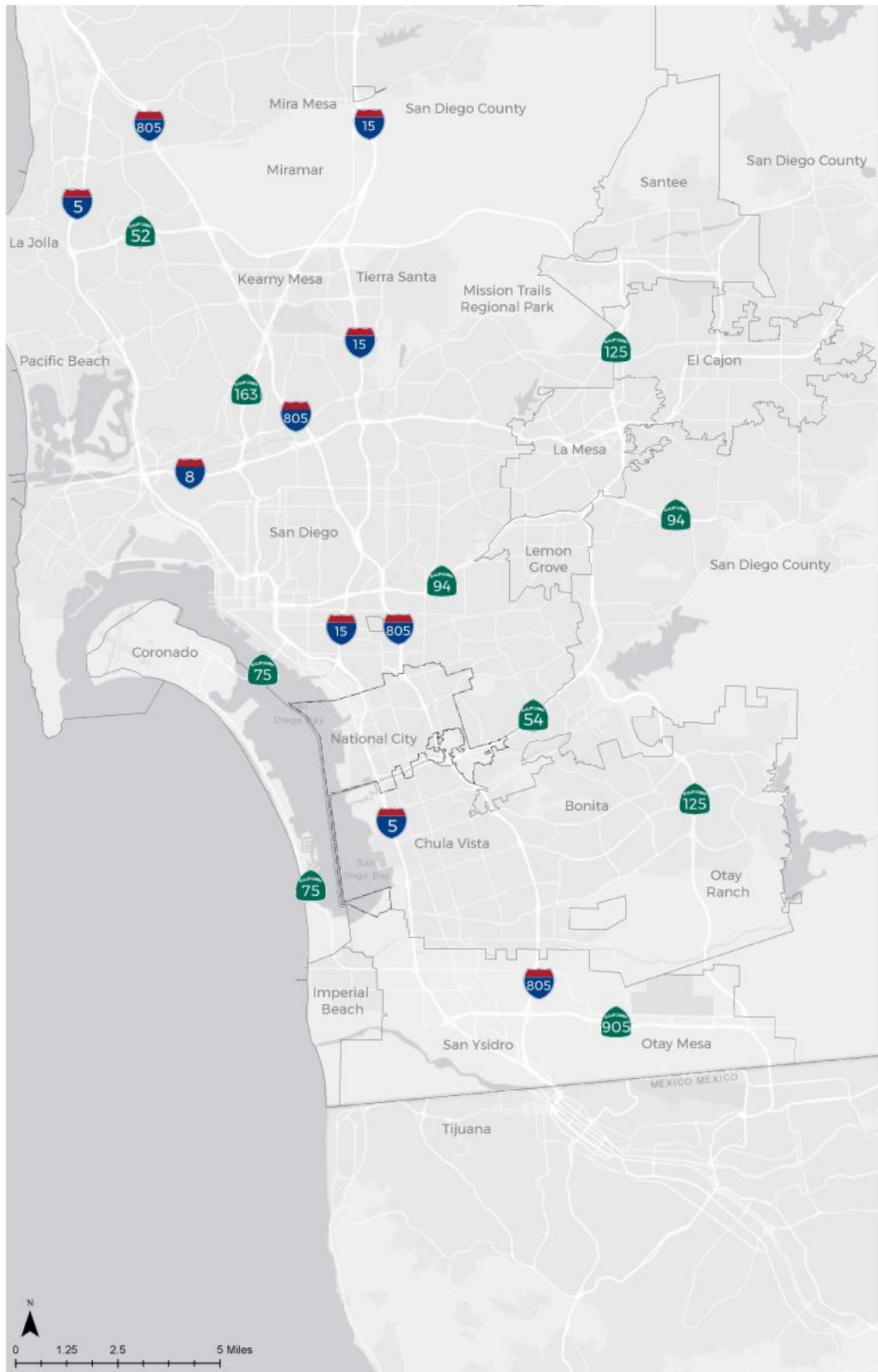


Figure 1: Regional Context

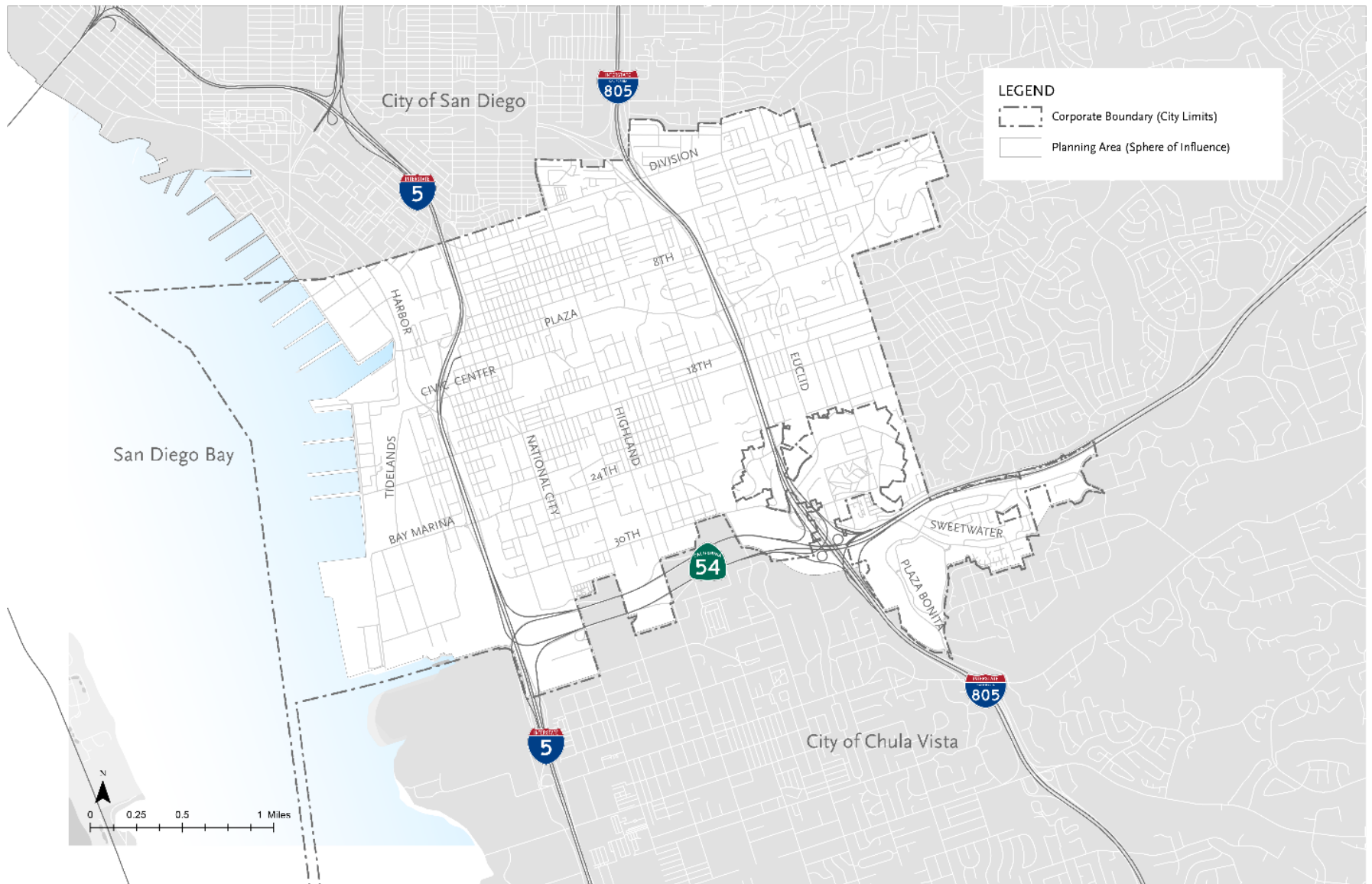


Figure 2: Planning Area

The city's corporate boundary encompasses approximately 9.2 square miles. Of this, approximately 7.5 square miles (81.7 percent) consists of land area and 1.7 square miles (18.3 percent) consists of water bodies such as the San Diego Bay.

The city is comprised of three main communities, identified by major parks: El Toyon, Kimball, and Las Palmas. These communities are further divided into residential neighborhoods and business districts with distinct identities, illustrated in Figure 3: Existing Land Uses. Residential areas are organized around the "neighborhood unit concept" where elementary schools act as the focal point of each neighborhood.

The El Toyon community includes the Rancho de la Nacion, Ira Harbison, and Palmer Way neighborhoods. The Kimball community includes Downtown, Old Town, Central, and John Otis neighborhoods. The Kimball community also includes the Mile of Cars and Harbor business districts. The Las Palmas community includes the Olivewood, Las Palmas, and Lincoln Acres neighborhoods. The Las Palmas community also includes the Plaza Bonita business district. These park and school facilities, which are key organizing elements of the City's underlying structure, are illustrated in Figure 4: School and Park Facilities.

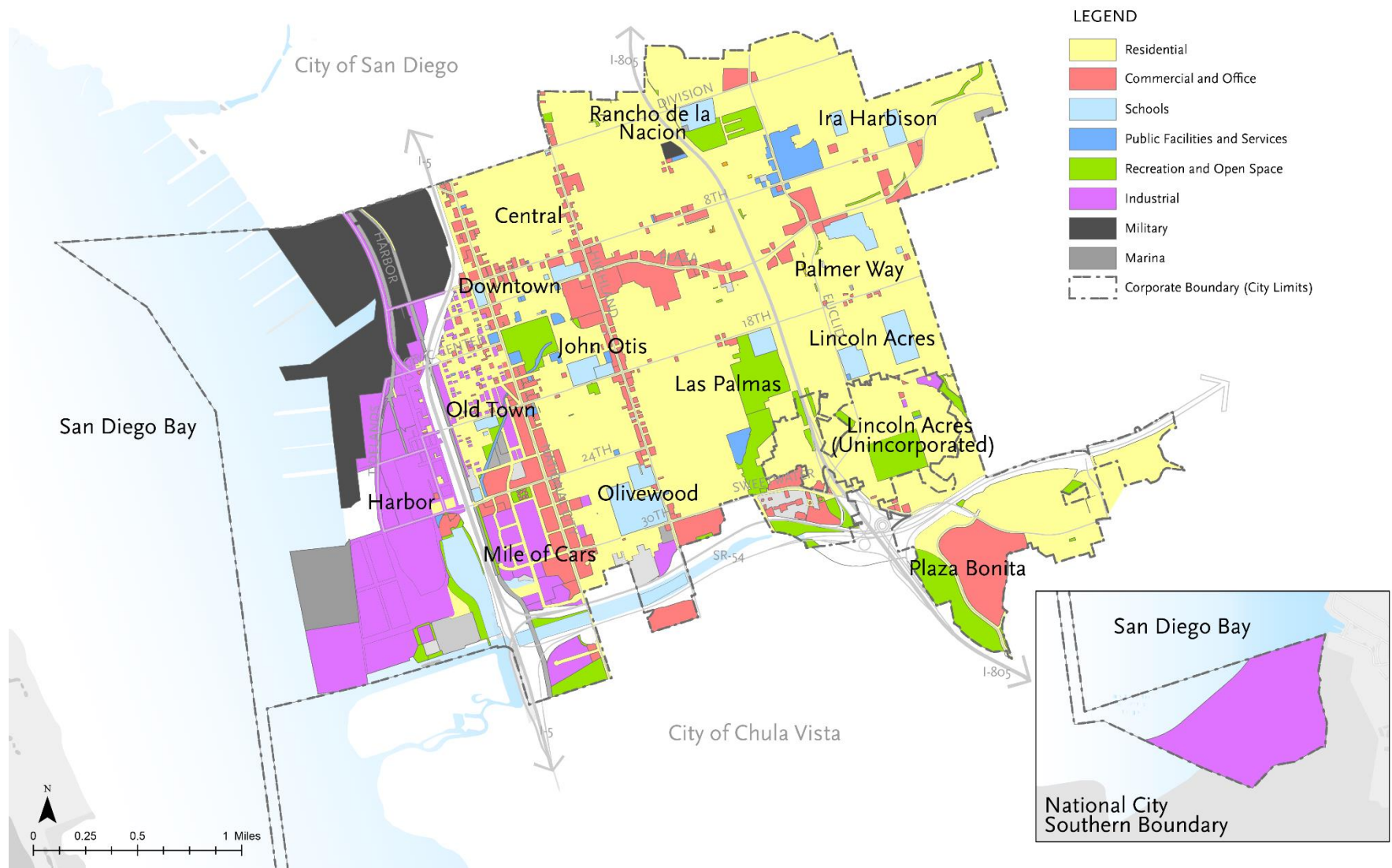


Figure 3: Existing Land Uses

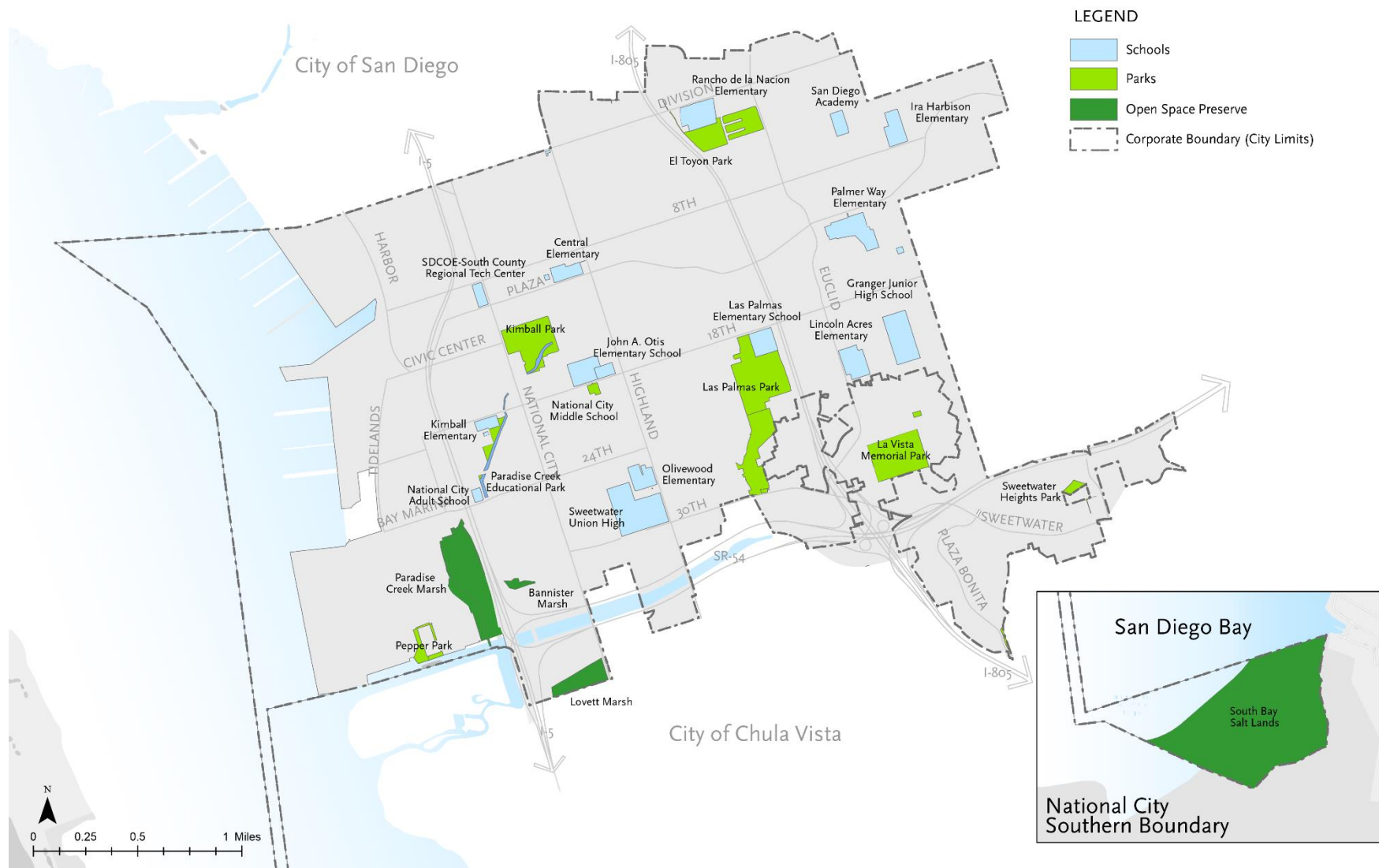


Figure 4: School and Park Facilities

2.2. Sphere of Influence: Lincoln Acres (Unincorporated)

The State of California encourages cities and counties to look beyond their borders during general plan development and updated processes, and to consider a planning area that extends beyond the municipal limits. Therefore, the planning area for the Land Use Element extends beyond the City's corporate boundaries and encompasses the City's sphere of influence (SOI). The City's SOI includes approximately 297.8 acres of unincorporated territory, also known as Lincoln Acres, that is currently under the jurisdiction of the County of San Diego, as seen previously in Figure 2. This land will remain under the jurisdiction of the County of San Diego until such a time that it is annexed into the City. By including it in the planning area, however, the City recognizes the impact that development within this area has on the future of the city. All other land surrounding the planning area is within the city limits of Chula Vista or San Diego.

2.3. Existing Land Uses

Table 1 inventories current land uses within the planning area based off the 2018 current land use layer from SanGIS. Residential uses constitute the largest use (26.4 percent, or 1634.8 acres). Of this, single-family detached is the most prominent (17.0 percent, or 1054.4 acres), followed by single-family attached (5.2 percent, or 324.7 acres) and multi-family residential (3.5 percent, or 214.8 acres). Other residential uses, such as mobile home parks and group quarters, are limited throughout the planning area (0.7 percent, or 40.9 acres).

	National City (City Limits)		Planning Area (Sphere of Influence)	
Existing Land Use	Acres	Percentage	Acres	Percentage
Residential	1492.0	25.3%	1634.8	26.4%
<i>Single Family Detached</i>	<i>942.7</i>	<i>16.0%</i>	<i>1054.4</i>	<i>17.0%</i>
<i>Single Family Attached</i>	<i>294.0</i>	<i>5.0%</i>	<i>324.7</i>	<i>5.2%</i>
<i>Multi-Family</i>	<i>214.4</i>	<i>3.6%</i>	<i>214.8</i>	<i>3.5%</i>
<i>Residential Other</i>	<i>40.9</i>	<i>0.7%</i>	<i>40.9</i>	<i>0.7%</i>
Commercial and Office	430.0	7.3%	432.0	7.0%
Mixed Use	2.0	0.03%	2.0	0.03%
Public Facilities and Services	87.4	1.5%	117.6	1.9%
Schools	143.4	2.4%	143.4	2.3%
Military	323.7	5.5%	323.7	5.2%
Industrial	636.1	10.8%	640.1	10.3%
Recreation, Open Space, and Agriculture	234.7	4.0%	243.5	3.9%
Transportation, Communications, and Utilities	1380.9	23.4%	1389.4	22.4%

Water	1079.7	18.3%	1079.7	17.4%
Vacant and Undeveloped Land	86.3	1.5%	101.6	1.6%
Total	5,896.4	100%	6194.2	100%

Table 1: Existing Land Uses Summary

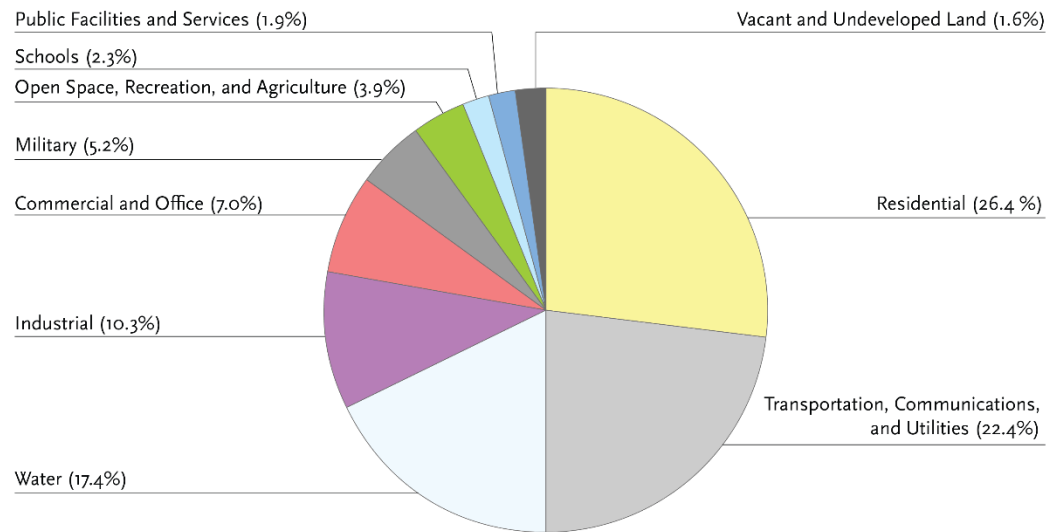


Figure 5: Existing Land Uses Summary - Pie Chart

Transportation, Communications, and Utilities are the next largest use (22.4 percent or 1389.4 acres). This category includes all street right-of-ways, railroad right-of-ways, and trolley stations and associated parking lots. In addition, it includes communications and utility-related uses, such as relay towers and water and wastewater treatment facilities.

The next prominent category is industrial uses (10.3 percent, or 640.1 acres). This includes a combination of light and heavy industrial uses, which are concentrated within the western portion of the National City by the harbor front. This category includes a noncontinuous area of National City located within the South San Diego Bay Unit of the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge containing salt ponds. Within the refuge, approximately 1,050 acres of salt ponds are in active salt production by a permitted commercial salt operation. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has prepared a plan for the future restoration of this area to habitat.

Commercial and office uses follow as the next largest use (7.0 percent, or 432.0 acres). This category includes a wide variety of activities, including retail and strip commercial, arterial commercial, automobile dealers, neighborhood commercial, service stations, shopping centers, and other retail trade. Office uses are included, as well. In general, commercial and office uses tend to be concentrated along major roads, such as National City Boulevard, Highland Avenue, and E. Plaza Boulevard. Mixed use, which is a combination of street level commercial uses with residential and/or office uses above, do not currently constitute a significant portion of the planning area (0.03 percent, or 2.0 acres).

Military uses comprise the next largest land use (5.2 percent, or 323.7 acres). Military uses within the planning area include Naval Base San Diego, the Army National Guard (located at 303 Palm Avenue), and the US Government Navy Department (1005 E. Plaza Boulevard). These areas are controlled by the United States military.

Recreation, open space, and agriculture (3.9 percent, or 243.5 acres) follow. This use includes parks and recreational centers containing activities such as tennis or basketball courts, baseball diamonds, soccer fields, or playgrounds. Public and private golf courses are included in this category, as well. It also includes wildlife and natural open space preserves and urban farms. As previously discussed, the City's three main parks – El Toyon, Kimball, and Las Palmas – play a large role in shaping community identity. Schools (2.3 percent, or 143.4 acres) further establish distinct neighborhood identities. Public facilities and services (1.9 percent, or 117.6 acres) include fire/police facilities, community centers, hospital/health care-related uses, and other public services.

In general, the planning area is largely built-out with limited vacant and undeveloped land. Vacant and undeveloped land constitutes the smallest land area (1.5 percent, or 101.6 acres). The demands on National City, however, to accommodate growth, provide affordable housing, and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and vehicle miles travelled (VMT) will continue. Subsequent sections discuss the overarching vision for the City's future growth and strategies to address these needs given the planning area's largely built-out state.

2.4. Special Planning Considerations

2.4.1. *Airport Land Use Compatibility*

No airports are located within the planning area; however, there are three airports located near National City. These include the San Diego International Airport (SDIA), the Naval Air Station North

Island (NASNI) located in Coronado, and Brown Field Municipal Airport located to the south of the planning area in the Otay Mesa community of San Diego.

The state requires that the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority Board, as the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC), prepare Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans (ALUCPs) for each public-use airport and military air installation in the county. For military air installations, the state also requires the ALUC prepare the compatibility plans consistent with the Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) study prepared by the military. The intent of an ALUCP is to help ensure compatibility between airports and future land uses that surround them by addressing noise, overflight, safety, and airspace protection concerns, thereby minimizing the public's exposure to excessive noise and safety hazards within an airport influence area (AIA) over a 20-year horizon. Since the ALUC does not have land use authority, cities must implement the compatibility plan through their local land use plans, development restrictions, and zoning ordinances.

A 406-acre portion of National City is located within the AIA for SDIA. This area is outside the area of primary noise concern, but within the airspace protection and overflight notification areas. This area is referred to as "Review Area 2" in the SDIA ALUCP (2014). ALUC review is required for land use plans and regulations within this area that propose increases in height limits.

In addition, a 45-acre portion of the salt ponds located within the southernmost extent of National City, is within the AIA for Brown Field Municipal Airport. Similarly, this area is located outside the area of primary noise concern, but within the airspace protection and overflight notification areas. This area is referred to as "Review Area 2" in the Brown Field ALUCP (2010) and contains restrictions that limit the heights of structures, particularly in areas of high terrain.

According to the Draft NASNI ALUCP (2019), a portion of National City is within the AIA for NASNI. ALUC review is required for all new or amended land use plans, regulations, and projects within the AIA unless otherwise exempt.

2.4.2. Local Coastal Program

The California Coastal Act, which was passed by the legislature in 1976, regulates all development within the state-designated Coastal Zone. The Coastal Act requires that individual jurisdictions adopt local coastal programs to implement the Coastal Act. Within the National City planning area, the Coastal Zone includes all the area west of I-5 and a small area east of I-5, south of 30th Street.

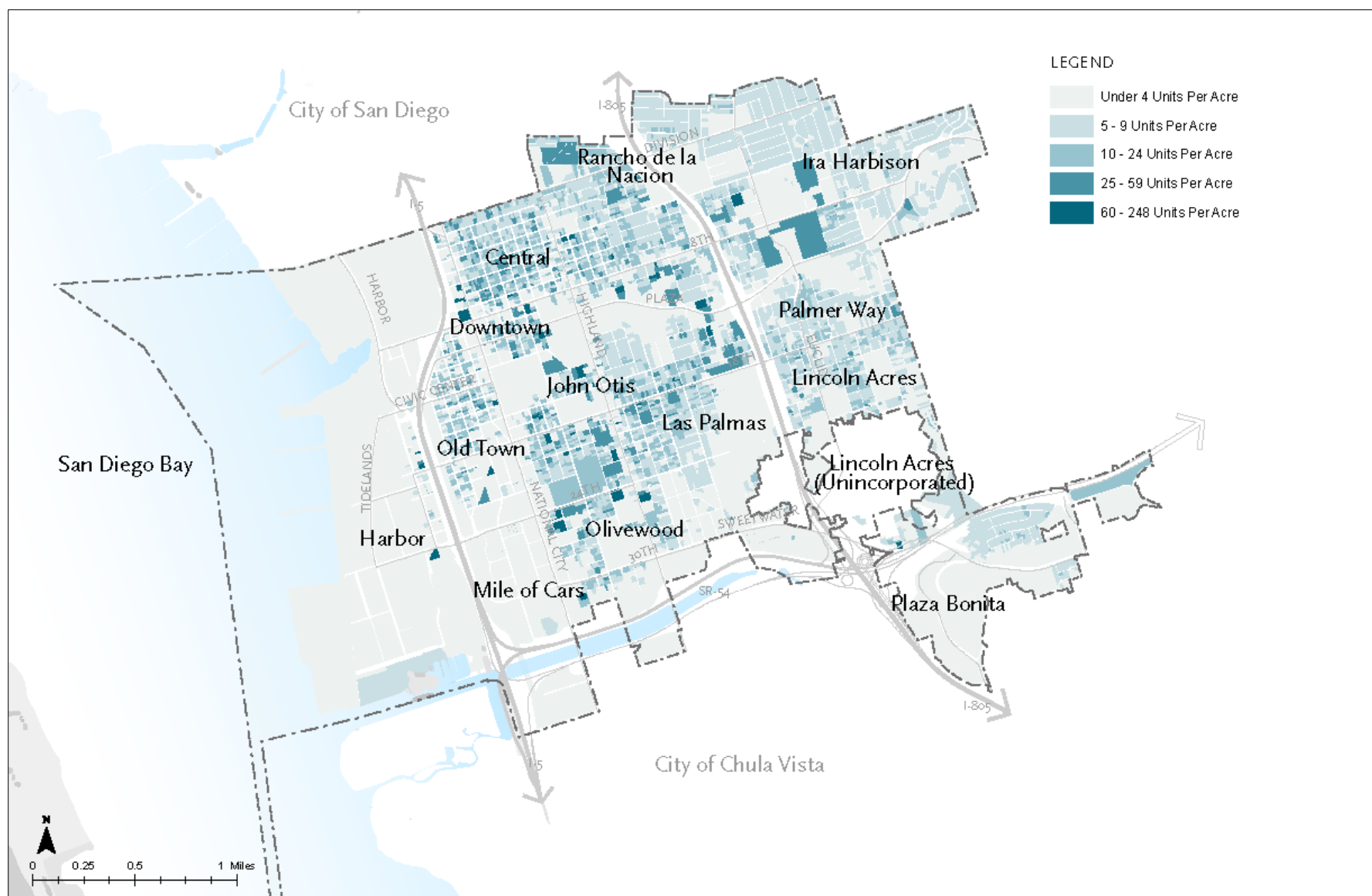
Three separate agencies control land within National City's Coastal Zone: the San Diego Unified Port District, the United States Navy, and the City of National City. The land controlled by the Port District is included in the Port Master Plan, which is undergoing a comprehensive update. Federal lands under the jurisdiction of the US Navy are under the jurisdiction of the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act, which states that military lands shall comply with coastal planning to the extent that national security is not imperiled. The Coastal Zone area over which National City retains jurisdiction totals approximately 575 acres and is bounded by the U.S. Navy lands to the north, and the Chula Vista Bayfront to the south. The City has an adopted Local Coastal Program (LCP) for this area; development in the Coastal Zone must comply with the LCP in addition to the General Plan.

2.5. Development Patterns: Density and Intensity

2.5.1. Residential Density

Density is expressed in terms of dwelling units per acre (du/ac). The range of residential densities across National City are illustrated in Figure 6. Figure 6 is derived from the number of existing units, based on records from the San Diego County Assessor's Office,² divided by the parcel acreage. Densities within National City range from under 4 units per acre to upwards of 200 units per acre, summarized in Table 2. A majority of the residential density within the city is under 4 du/ac to 48 du/ac.

² Obtained from the SanGIS 2020 Parcel layer.







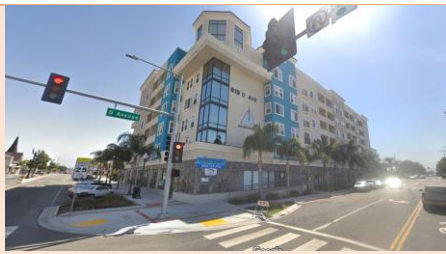
Density Range	Acres in the City	Example
Under 4 du/ac	10361.9	 <p>1919 Prospect St</p>
5-24 du/ac	928.8	 <p>511 Palm Ave</p>
25-48 du/ac	123.7	 <p>2005 F Ave</p>
49-75 du/ac	29.4	 <p>735 Arcadia Ave</p>
76-248 du/ac	8.1	 <p>819 D Ave</p>

Table 2: Residential Density Summary

2.5.2. Development Intensity

Development intensity can be expressed in terms of Floor-Area Ratio (FAR). FAR is a ratio that is calculated from the total building floor area divided by the total parcel area. Figure 7 illustrates the development intensities across National City, based on building square footage information from the San Diego County Assessor's Office,³ divided by the parcel area. Development intensities within National City range from under 0.1 FAR to 5.7 FAR, summarized in Table 3. A majority of the city is under 1 FAR.

³ Obtained from the SanGIS 2020 Parcel layer.

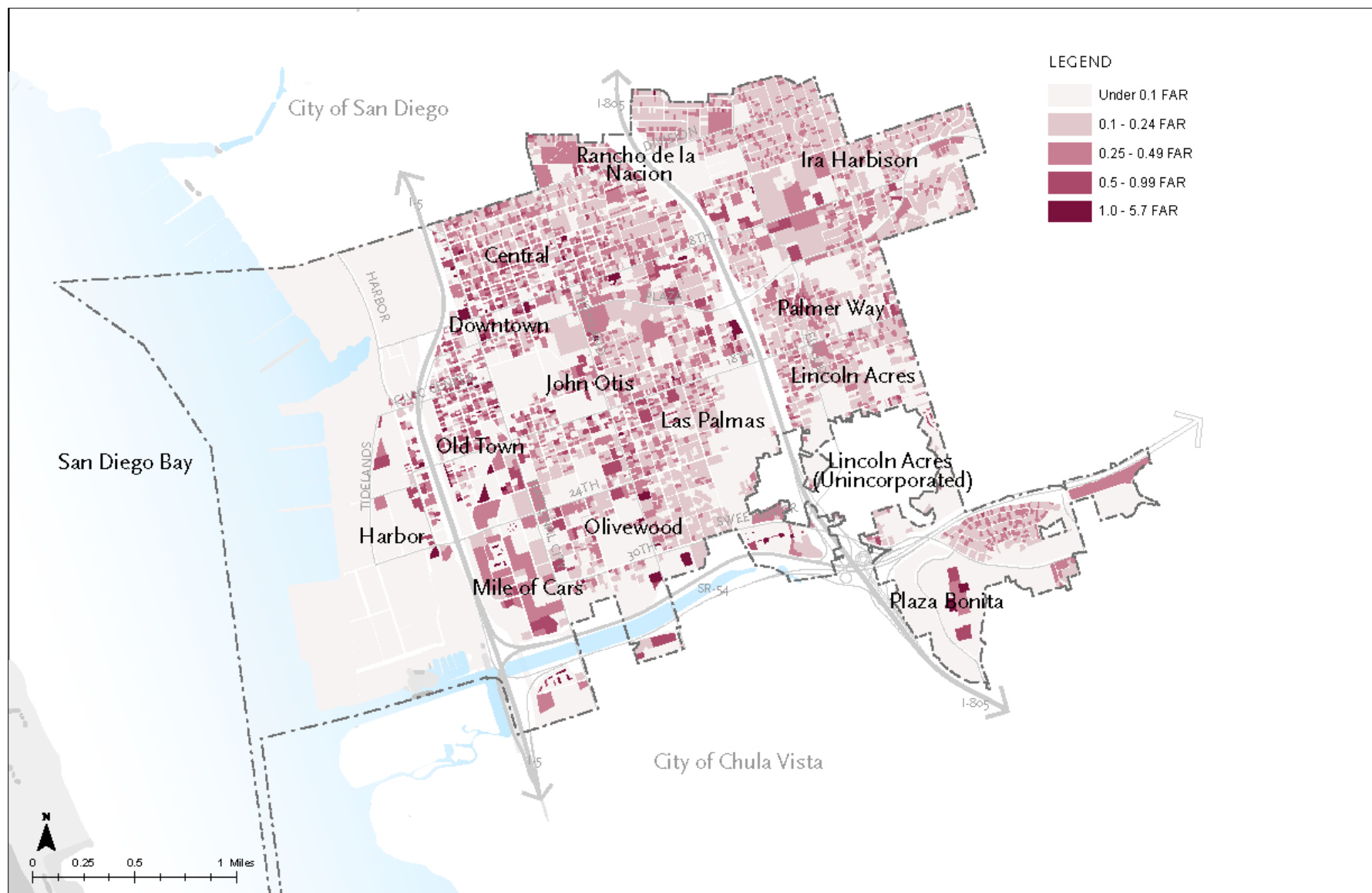


Figure 7: Development Intensity

Development Intensity	Acres in the City	Example
Under 0.1 FAR	9901.3	 <p>325 Mile of Cars Way</p>
0.1 – 0.24 FAR	863.1	 <p>1705 Highland Ave</p>
0.25 – 0.49 FAR	517.8	 <p>2220 E Plaza Blvd</p>
0.5 – 0.99 FAR	141.9	 <p>127 E 8th St</p>
1.0 – 5.7 FAR	28.7	 <p>700 National City Blvd</p>

Table 3: Development Intensity Summary

2.6. Development Activity

Table 4 summarizes the development activity that has occurred between 2013 – 2020 and lists projects that are in review, in construction, or constructed. Over the past eight years, 717 new residential units have been built. A total of 1,322 units⁴ are entitled or expected to be entitled based on current development interest. A majority of this development activity has been in the Downtown Specific Plan, mixed use (MXC-1, MXC-2, and MXD-2), and very high multi-unit residential (RM-3) areas of the city.

Project/Location	Zone	Status	Units	Description
National City Blvd and W 14th St	DSP DZ 12A	Entitled	31	Residential development proposal for 31 units.
Roosevelt Ave and W 15th St	DSP DZ 12B	Entitled	32	Residential development proposal for 32 units.
National City Blvd and W 16th St	DSP DZ 12B	Entitled	5	Residential development proposal for 5 units.
National City Blvd and E 16th St	DSP DZ 13	Entitled	201	Residential development proposal for 201 units.
233 Roosevelt Ave	DSP DZ 1A	Entitled	400	Residential development proposal for 400 affordable units. Project includes an approximately 10,000 s.f. childcare facility. A portion of the project is funded through the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) grant program.
Coachella Affordable Housing Investors Project at National City Blvd and E 12th St	DSP DZ 5B	In Construction	131	Project for 131 affordable units.
Waypoint Project at National City Blvd and Plaza Blvd	DSP DZ 6	In Review	300	Proposal for 300 affordable units and 13,000 s.f. of retail.
8th and B at 130 E 8th St	DSP DZ 9 and 10	In Construction	108	Project for 108 units (ranging from micro-units to rowhomes) and restaurant/commercial space.
Enping Project at 2209 E 8th St	I	In Construction	39	Development project for 39 units.
Paradise Senior Apartments at 625 S V Ave	I	Constructed	136	Development project for 136 senior units.
Mariner's Landing at 112-148 E 31st St	MXC-1	Constructed	61	Residential development project for 61 units.
Office to Residential Conversion at 2530 E Plaza Blvd	MXC-1	In Construction	13	Conversion of an office facility to 13 residential units.

⁴ After factoring in the replacement of existing units, the net total units is 854.

The Kimball at 1110 E 8th St	MXC-2	Constructed	47	Residential development project for 47 units.
Plaza Del Rey at 900 E 12th St	MXC-2	Constructed	15	Residential development project for 15 units.
Bella Vita at 1447-1505 Sheryl Lane	MXD-2	Constructed	70	Residential development project for 70 units.
Palm Plaza at 1632-1640 E Plaza Blvd	MXD-2	Constructed	77	Residential development project for 77 units.
Vista Jardin at 1904 F Ave	RM-3	Constructed	10	Residential development project for 10 units.
Alinea Townhomes at 1823 F Ave	RM-3	Constructed	10	Residential development project for 10 units.
National City Park Apartments at 2323 D Ave	RM-3	In Review	208	Multi-phased redevelopment proposal for the National City Park Apartments. An anticipated 208 units to be redeveloped during the 6th Cycle (2021 - 2029) planning period.
Kimball Way	RM-3 and MXD-2	Entitled	145	Public-private partnership for the development of 145 senior units. Project includes a senior center, health center, and specialized services and amenities.

Table 4: Development Activity

In addition to the development activity listed in Table 4, there is an approximately 8-acre commercial CarMax facility proposed near the intersection of Plaza Bonita Road and Sweetwater Road. This commercial project is located in the mixed use (MXD-2) zone.

Figure 8 illustrates where these projects are located in the City along with the Potential Opportunity Areas described in the subsequent section.

2.7. Potential Opportunity Areas

National City is predominantly built-out with limited vacant, developable land. Infill and redevelopment strategies can play an important role to help the City accommodate its future growth and projected housing needs. The analysis of residential density and development intensity indicates that while the city is largely built-out, a majority of the area is under 4 du/ac and under an FAR of 1.0; there is an opportunity to further intensify development densities and intensities in strategic areas. Recent development activity indicates a growing interest in the City's Downtown Specific Plan, mixed use (MXC-1, MXC-2, and MXD-2), and very high multi-unit residential (RM-3) areas.

To further identify suitable candidates for infill and redevelopment, a multi-factor evaluation took place of all parcels within the City of National City. Sites meeting one or more of the factors listed in Table 5 were considered for inclusion with greater weight to sites meeting more than one criterion. The opportunity areas resulting from this analysis are shown in Figure 8.

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION/DATA SOURCE
Vacant	The site does not include a significant structure and/or other improvement(s). <i>Source: SanGIS 2020 Existing Land Use layer with staff verification via satellite imagery and/or field verification</i>
Zoning and Lot Size*	The site is zoned 30 du/acre or greater and is between 0.5 and 10 acres. <i>Source: City of National City and SanGIS 2020 Parcels layer</i>
Property Valuation	The property has a low improved value (60% or less), based on available building, land, and property valuation records from the San Diego County Assessor's Office. <i>Source: SanGIS 2020 Parcels layer</i>
Mobility Options and Access to Public Amenities and Services	The site is near transit, public amenities, and within a compact, walkable environment. <i>Source: City of National City Transit Network layer, City of National City INTRACONnect Study (2020), and/or field verification</i>
Structure Age	The primary structure on a site is over 30 years old. <i>Source: SanGIS 2020 Parcels layer</i>
City-Owned	The site is owned by the City and may be used for residential development. <i>Source: SanGIS 2020 Parcels layer and the City of National City</i>
Prior Cycle	The site was identified in a prior cycle Housing Element Inventory and has not yet developed or redeveloped. <i>Source: City of National City 4th and 5th Cycle Housing Element Inventories</i>
Development Capacity	The site has a residential development capacity greater than 25% per existing allowable zoning. <i>Source: SanGIS 2020 Parcels layer</i>
Development Interest	The property owner has discussed the potential development (or redevelopment) of the site with National City staff, the site has been analyzed through a separate planning study that recommends its redevelopment (e.g., INTRACONnect; 24 th Street TODO), the site has a "For Sale" or "For Lease" sign, and/or the site has been entitled. <i>Source(s): City of National City, Opportunity Zone Listings, and/or field verification</i>
Notes: * = Only applicable for low- and very low- Income housing sites.	

Table 5: Site Suitability Analysis Criteria

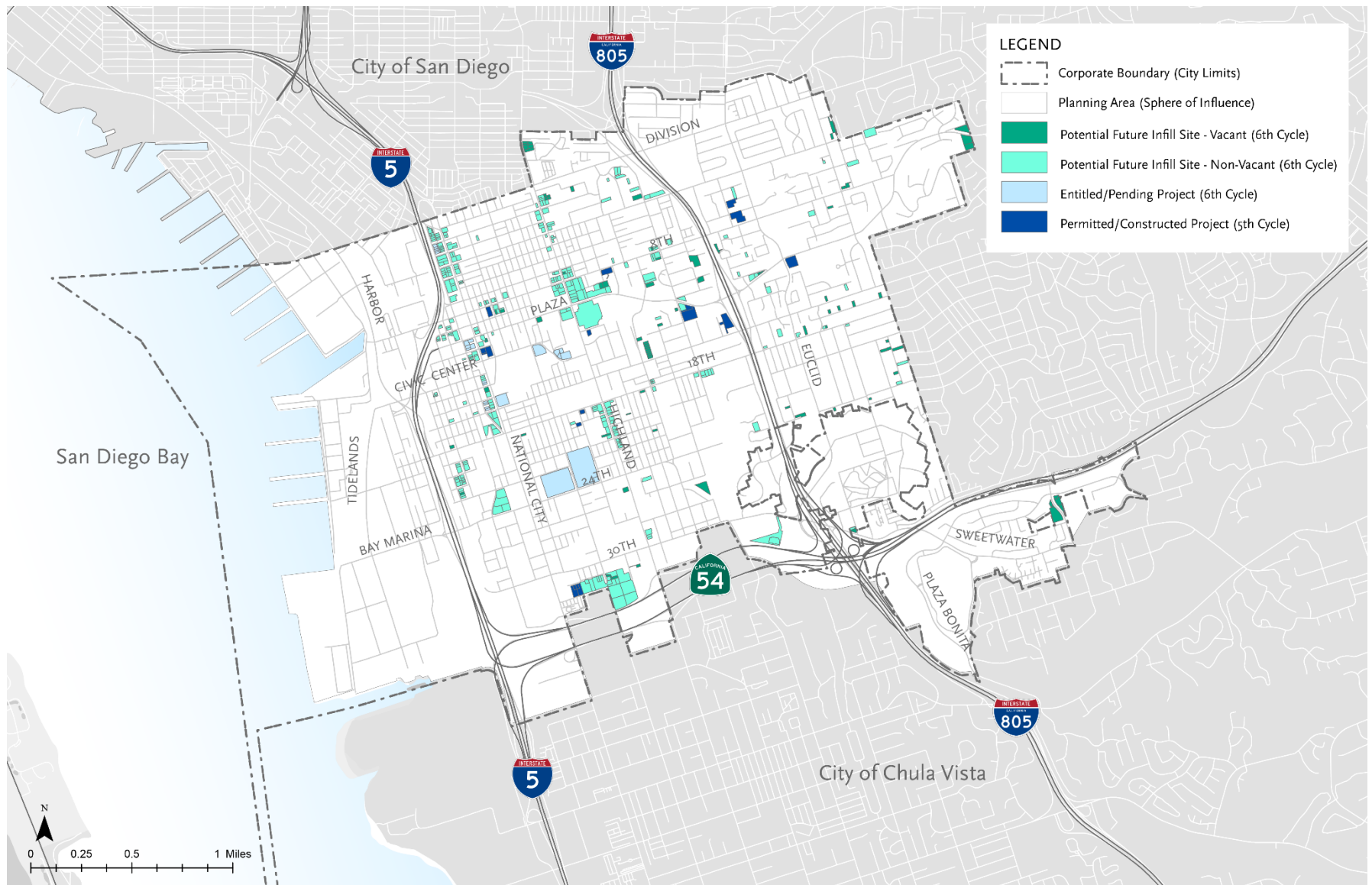


Figure 8: Development Activity and Potential Opportunity Areas

2.8. Transit Priority Areas (TPAs)

Senate Bill 743 offers CEQA streamlining benefits to projects within Transit Priority Areas (TPAs). TPAs are defined as an area within a half mile of a major transit stop⁵ that is existing or planned.⁶

Jurisdictions, such as the City of San Diego, have further leveraged TPAs as a policy planning framework and created additional incentives to encourage transit-oriented development in these areas. Figure 9 illustrates the City's current transit network. Figure 10 illustrates areas that could potentially qualify as TPAs based on existing transit and two alignment options being considered for the future Purple Line (proposed light rail transit line from generally from the South Bay (Otay Mesa East, Cross Border Xpress, San Ysidro) to Sorrento (UTC)). The Purple Line is envisioned as a grade-separated facility in urban areas. The proposed stops and route alignment will undergo further refinement as a part of SANDAG's transportation planning processes.

⁵ A major transit stop is defined as a site containing an existing rail transit station, a ferry terminal served by either a bus or rail transit service, or the intersection of two or more major bus routes with a frequency of service of 15 minutes or less during the morning and afternoon peak commute periods.

⁶ The planned stop must be scheduled to be completed within the planning horizon in a Transportation Improvement Program adopted pursuant to Section 450.216 or 450.322 of Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

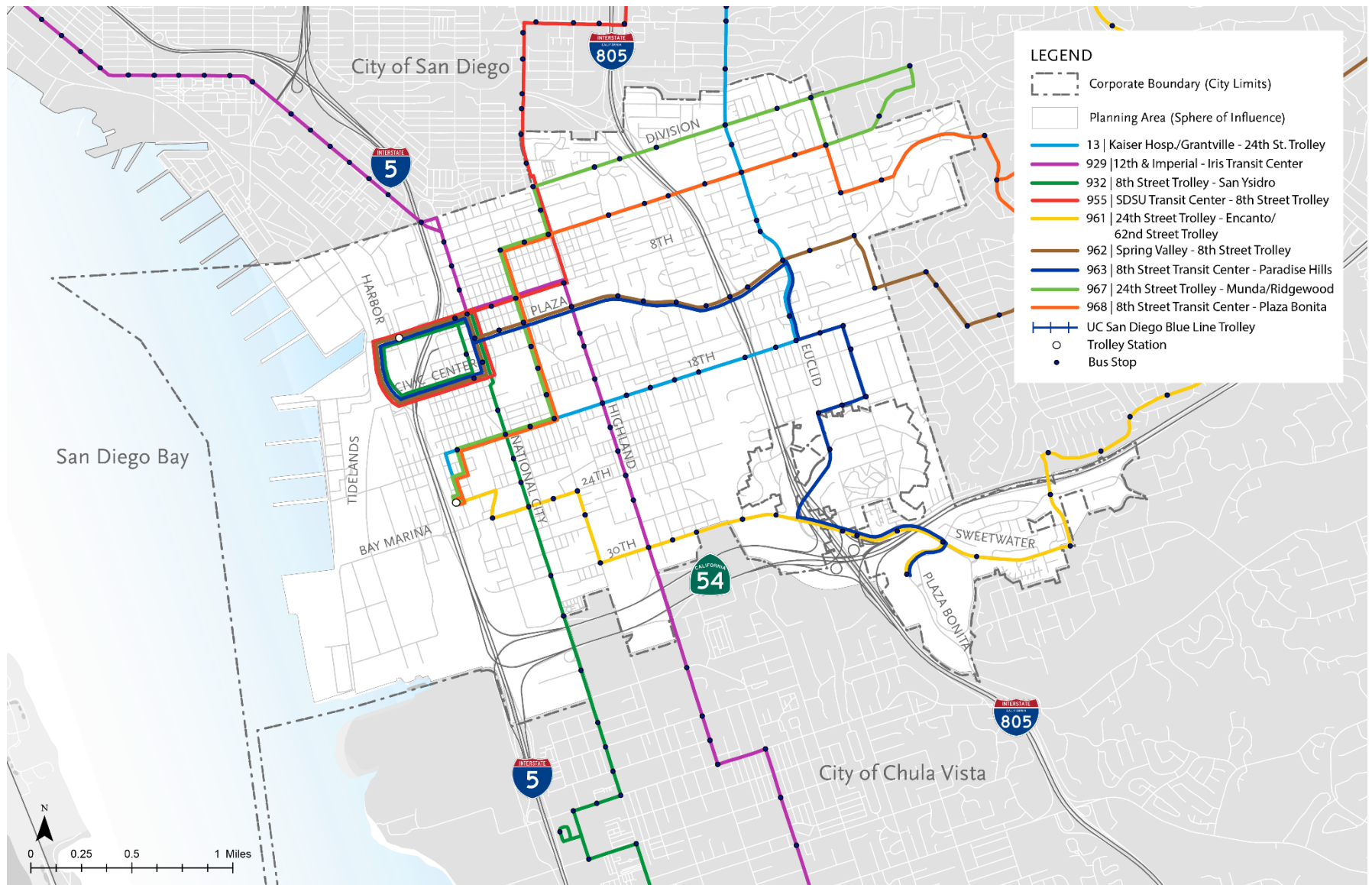


Figure 9: Existing Transit Network

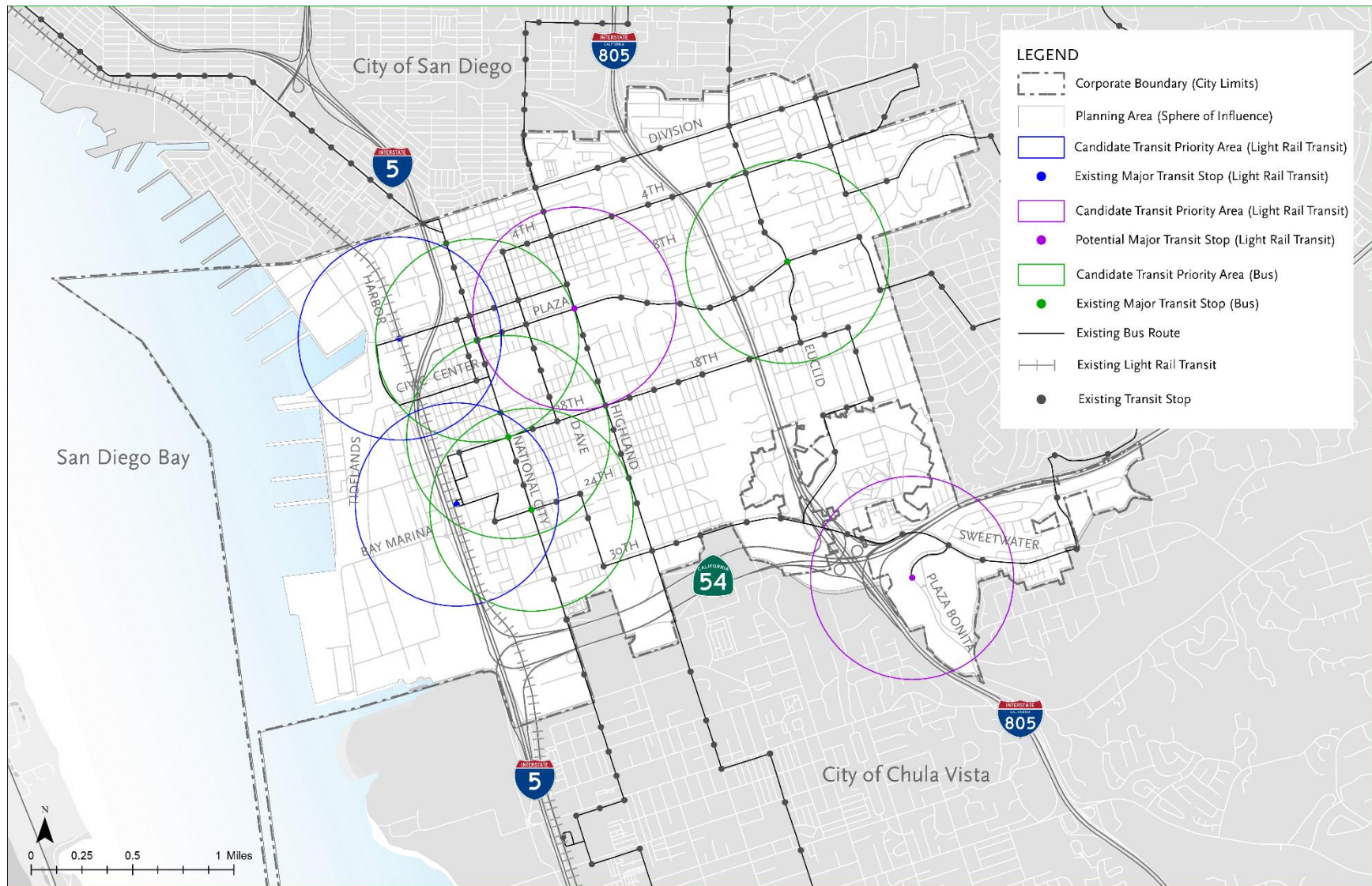


Figure 10: Candidate Transit Priority Areas (TPAs)

2.9. Disadvantaged Communities

SB 1000 requires the General Plan to identify disadvantaged communities⁷ and address environmental justice. Areas disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards are mapped in Figure 11 using the CalEnviroScreen 3.0 index. CalEnviroScreen 3.0 aggregates environmental, health, and socioeconomic data to assess the pollution burden of a community relative to other census tracts across the state. All census tracts within the city are within the 45th to 95th percentiles of the CalEnviroScreen 3.0 index, indicating significant pollution burden and vulnerability throughout the city. The western portion of National City is among the top 25 percent of impacted tracts across the State of California identified by CalEnviroScreen 3.0. The western area of National City, shown in Figure 12, qualifies as both an SB 535 disadvantaged community⁸ and AB 1550 low-income community.⁹

⁷ A disadvantaged community is an area identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to Section 39711 of the Health and Safety Code or an area that is a low-income area that is disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.

⁸ SB 535 disadvantaged communities are defined by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) as the top 25% scoring areas from CalEnviroScreen along with other areas with high amounts of pollution and low populations.

⁹ Low-income households are households with incomes at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income or with incomes at or below the threshold designated as low income by the Department of Housing and Community Development's list of state income limits adopted pursuant to Section 50093.

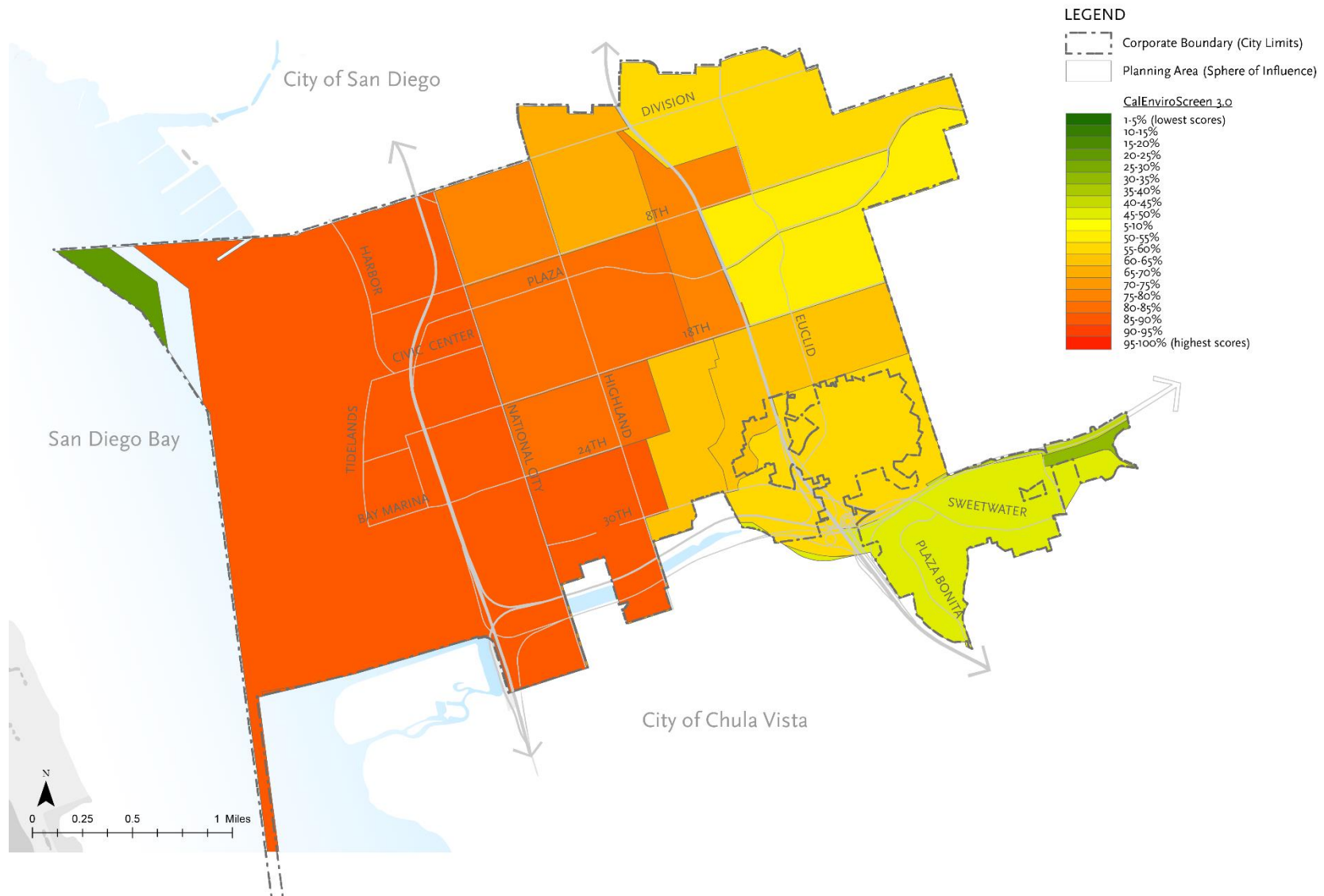


Figure 11: CalEnviroScreen 3.0 Index

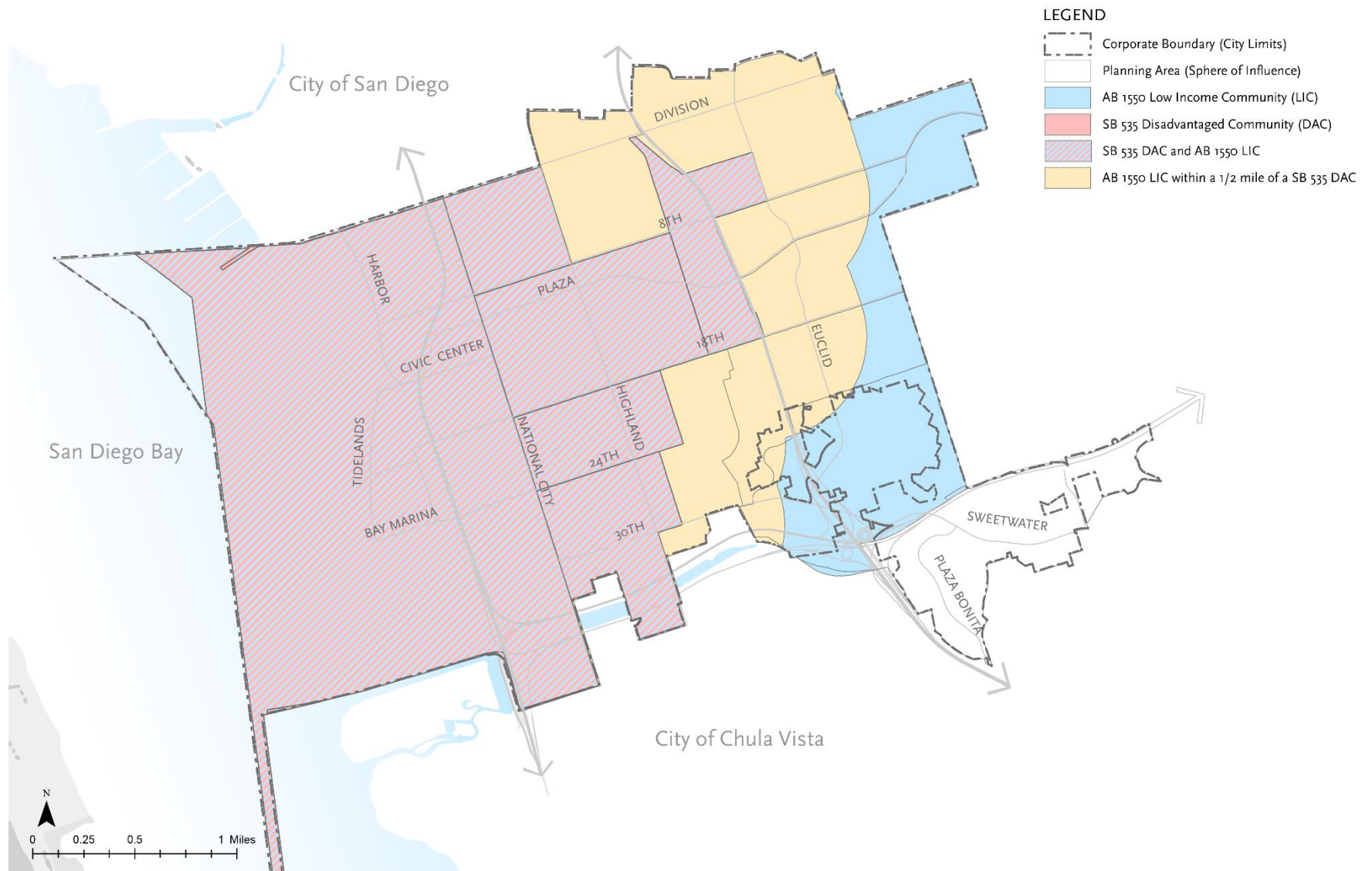


Figure 12: SB 535 Disadvantaged Communities and AB 1550 Low-Income Communities